

St **H**enry Walpole, S.J., Burnham Market  
**P**ARISH **O**ur Lady Star of the Sea, Wells-next-the-Sea  
**O**ur Lady of the Annunciation, Walsingham  
 St **P**eter, Blakeney

### Number 3 June 2023

Welcome to the third edition of Hoop. It has been suggested that we have a section called "Letters to the Editor". If you would like to submit a letter or anything else, please contact me, Maria Spink on

01485 210155/077 875 700 93 or  
 maria\_spink@outlook.com.

Many of you will have been receiving the reminder emails about up-and-coming events. However, it has been drawn to my attention that some people are not receiving them. If you have not received one of these emails it may be because I misread your email address so to help me, please could you email me on maria\_spink@outlook.com and I can rectify this mistake? Also, if you are new to the Parish and are happy to receive communication emails you can email me at the above address and I can add you to the list.

Maria Spink

### SVP LAUNCHES A NEW CONFERENCE IN WALSINGHAM

The Society of St Vincent de Paul launched a new conference (group) in Walsingham on 23rd September 2022. In hindsight this was a bit pre-emptive as we didn't actually have any members, but the National Office were keen to get us going – so we rose to the challenge! We are now one of 876 conferences nationwide.

The SVP's mission is to tackle poverty in all

its forms by providing practical assistance to people in need, no matter what their faith. As you can imagine, this is quite a broad remit to say the least, so the typical activities of a conference could include visiting isolated or lonely people; helping people access grants, benefits and the care to which they are entitled to; sourcing funds to pay for furniture or household essentials; helping single parent families move house; providing food; in fact, almost anything! The key thing is that we approach each request for help with compassion and consideration for support tailored to the uniqueness of the individual and situation.

The last time an SVP conference existed in our parish was at least 12 years ago. Since then, we have emerged from the pandemic into a cost-of-living crisis, and our services are now in big demand, even in our relatively wealthy area of North Norfolk, where rural poverty is largely hidden from tourists, we need your help in responding to this need in four ways:

1. We now have four full members and one auxiliary/support-member and this is not enough to cover the whole parish area from Walsingham to Wells, Blakeney and Burnham Market (as well as Fakenham!). So, we are looking for anyone who would be able to donate a little of their time to volunteer. There is no obligation to attend every meeting (held fortnightly) and there is no minimum number of hours required to volunteer. We ask for you to do only as much as you can easily manage. We need



Conference. From left to right: Lianne, Nic, Fr Des, James, Patrick, Cath, Trisha (taking the photograph: Julia)

to identify those who need our services. If you are aware of anyone who could benefit in the ways described above otherwise, please contact myself, James McCullough at

presidente060011@svp.org.uk

2. We operate a policy of complete confidentiality.

3. Any amount of money that people are able to donate goes directly into providing our services to those in need locally. Please consider if you can donate anything to help. Again, please contact James McCullough (address above) for ways to donate.

4. We need your prayers, that we are able to find and help those in need.

#### **Why we need an SVP conference.**

Many people in the parish already help those in need or those who are vulnerable in some way. The Conference can provide a safety net so that those whom they help can always be sure of the support that they need. This ensures that no-one already helping has to be indispensable. We also felt that having an SVP Conference in the parish would demonstrate our commitment to Catholic Social Teaching. The extent of our outreach will become clear as we become more established, but in the meantime, we have already received many blessings, individually and as a group, among them new friendships, stimulating reflection and debate, and the flourishing of our parish community, for which we thank God. We cannot obviously publicise all the work we are doing but I am confident we are already making a difference to peoples' lives. I feel that we are answering Christ's call in the gospels for us to love our neighbour, both within our parish and beyond.

For more information about the work of the SVP, please visit [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)  
Thank you to everyone who is doing such valuable work.

James McCullough



#### **IRIS BIRTWHISTLE BURNHAM MARKET**

Every parish has its colourful characters, long remembered and the stuff of local legend, but few in my experience have been quite so vivid as Iris Birtwistle who had worshipped at St Henry's in Burnham Market from her arrival in north Norfolk in the mid-1970s though to her death in 2006. Vivid, on occasion - by her own admission - demanding (not least in wanting to be known by her initials IM), but also extraordinary: in how she had navigated the challenges life sent her; in the nationally-acclaimed art gallery she ran at Burnham Deepdale, ostensibly out of a caravan; and in her writing where her remarkable faith is explored in words that have stayed in my head ever since.

Those fellow parishioners who remember her may have more mixed memories. She certainly cut a dash in her dark glasses, fedora and collection of colourful rings. Her voice was, she confessed, occasionally "astringent", the result, she explained, of shouting commands against an east wind on an Orkneys' base as an officer in the Wrens during the Second World War. And if she was intolerant of relativism in painting as in the practice of religion, she always held herself to the same high standards.

She had to be tough because life dealt her a particularly cruel blow. A photographer and acclaimed writer in her younger years (Robert Graves was a fan, as was Muriel Spark), she adopted three boys in the early 1950s, and raised them solo, setting up her first gallery at Walberswick in Suffolk

in an old battery hen house to support the family. It allowed a pace of life that fitted better with their daily routine, she reflected later. In such an unlikely setting she was the first gallerista to show David Hockney outside London.

From the age of 49, her eyesight began to fail as a result of hereditary glaucoma, leaving her latterly scarcely able to distinguish light from dark. It is hard to imagine how she coped with her world being turned upside down, but she refused to be self-pitying, though she did once tell me, "If I hadn't been a Catholic, I think I would have blown my brains out". There was a test to pass before you graduated from the caravan into the main body of the gallery in her house at Deepdale. Sometimes she could be blunt. "Are you a papist," the Australian musician Nick Cave recalls her asking him when he turned up while staying with a friend in Norfolk. He wasn't. Had she had her sight she might have recognised him as a famous rock star but didn't. Instead, somehow, she sensed a spiritual yearning in him, so evident in his songs, that became the basis of a friendship (to friends she was Lila) that lasted until her death.

That sixth sense was there, too, in allowing her to keep on working. For what she exhibited at Deepdale Exhibitions, even though she couldn't see it, was of extraordinary quality – Mary Potter, Mary Newcomb, Jeffrey Camp, Philip Sutton, all painters who have a place in the canon of twentieth century art. "Don't go to this gallery unless you appreciate the qualities of good art," wrote the British art world bible, the Art Review, before adding: "Mrs Birtwistle is an enthusiast and takes no prisoners."

How could she possibly know how good it was without seeing it? She needed, she explained, only to know the size and subject, then she would hold it. "It either has a visual weight about it, or it doesn't. If it's not flimsy or slight, I am aware that

it has a measure of profundity." No sooner was the explanation out of her mouth than she would be worrying aloud that she was a fake, but as Cave remarked: "what she said about them (the paintings), even though she couldn't see them, was absolutely right". She spoke little in those later years of her poetry. If you pressed her, she would sidestep the question. "The box is so much more interesting than the contents". A collection was published after her death by her sister Angela Kirby, also an accomplished poet. There is a poignant lament to lost love, It Takes Time, that is a favourite and begins:

*If, when we next meet,  
My lips alight a butterfly on yours,  
Do not cast me aside –  
Old ways take time to overcome.*

But what I always carry with me, especially when the Blessed Sacrament is held aloft on a Sunday in our simple unadorned church on Burnham Market green, is how she described that moment in her contribution to a collection of essays published a year before her death, Why I Am Still A Catholic. It captures an awe in the presence of God that we rarely hear spoken about today, even from the pulpit.

"Whenever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, I am so aware of the presence of God. It holds you in an atmosphere. You are caught in an element. It is like air you breathe. It's like wind. It's constant. It is just so there. I cannot deny his presence, something that is way beyond anything



this world could produce, an incredible dimension I cannot necessarily explain, but which I know is the truth.”

Iris Birtwistle is buried in the churchyard of St Mary's, Burnham Deepdale. Her caravan is gone, but something of her spirit remains in those who knew her.

“When Leaf and Note Are Gone” is published by Buff Press

Peter Stanford

### THE AMBER TRUST

Channel 4 recently broadcast a short series of programmes called ‘The Piano’, described as a ‘search for the UK’s best amateur pianists.’ This search was conducted by providing a piano in different rail station concourses and inviting a range of participants to play their own choice of music. The winner was Lucy, a young blind pianist who played different classical works in a way which captivated the judges and the audiences.

Lucy had been able to learn to play with such beauty through her teacher Daniel, a musician who works with the Amber Trust. By coincidence, I had been looking for a small musical charity to which I might offer support and had discovered this Trust online. The Trust provides financial grants for individual children with little or no sight and sometimes, as in Lucy’s case, with additional needs. The grants are awarded for music lessons, music therapy, instruments, equipment and concert tickets.

As my 70th birthday on Shrove Tuesday coincided with a pancake party planned in the parish, I provided a collection box at this celebration and suggested that anyone who might be thinking of a card or gift for me might wish to donate to the Amber Trust. The generosity of parishioners and friends resulted in a splendid gift of £156 for the Trust. There were also delicious savoury pancakes provided by Fr Keith, and delicious sweet

pancakes provided by Pamela – altogether a wonderful party before the beginning of Lent!

The website for the Amber Trust is  
[www.ambertrust.org](http://www.ambertrust.org)

Dilys Wadman



Lucy playing the piano

### WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

A recurrent theme in the responses to those questionnaires we filled in at the start of the Synodality process was ‘provision of opportunities to share our ideas’. Acting on this, we decided to have a series of informal exchange of views over a soup lunch. The first of these was on the topic ‘Women in the Church’. It was a lively exchange, ranging over several different issues: we talked about the numerical superiority of Women in the Church, their relative absence from positions of authority, their exclusion from ordained ministry, and much more. The purpose of the meeting was not to draw conclusions, but to allow important issues to emerge.

The question of women in ordained ministry is a difficult one, and I think it deserves to be raised again. It was, however, catalyst to a wider discussion: for what kind of ministry is it necessary to be ordained? During the long history of the Church there seems to have been a concentration of responsibility for everything in the hands of the clergy. Anecdotes were heard about parish priests who decided everything down what colour the walls should be painted;

who wouldn't allow lay people to count the church collection (hardly a privilege); who would, on no account, accept advice from lay people.

So much was made of the distinction between clergy and laity that they were subject to different judicial systems. It was as if there are two kinds of Christians: clerics (superior) and laity (inferior). This point of view began to be eroded long before the second Vatican Council but the teaching of that council, the Church's most recent, is that we are all, cleric or lay, equally members of the Body of Christ. The distinction between clergy and laity remains but is one of function, not essence. In the modern world, where the equality of women is acknowledged in almost every sphere of professional life there would seem to be no reason why women should not be influential in the Church as administrators, theologians, or pastoral workers without being ordained. The same applies, of course, to lay men but, on this occasion, we were talking about the role of women in the Church.

There is danger that a movement to use the talents of women in, and for, the Church might be seen as 'power grab'. We need to remind ourselves that for the exclusively male clergy to have become a monopoly of power in the Church is a perversion of the gospel. The gospel is quite clear that Jesus taught his disciples that, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..." (Matthew 20:25) It is desirable that women gradually assume greater responsibility within the Church not because there are shrinking numbers of male clergy and it has become impossible for things to go on, indefinitely, as before. No. It is desirable because it is the way forward for the Church in the twenty-first century, to build a Church which is best able to evangelise the world as it now is.

## COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS.

At the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic government regulations ruled out the practice of receiving communion under both species. In February the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales decided that, "a suitable time for permission to be granted for the resumption of Holy Communion received under both species would be at the Mass of the Lord's Supper in Holy Week 2023, given the theological significance of the celebration." Since it is such a long time since we enjoyed this privilege, I would like to remind you of some matters of doctrine and practice.

First of all, it must be said that no one is ever obliged to receive under both species. There was a great deal of argument about the matter at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Some of the reformers maintained that, because Jesus had told his disciples not only to 'take this and eat' but also to 'take this and drink' it was necessary to do both. The Council of Trent, however, taught "that laymen, and clerks when not consecrating, are not obliged, by any divine precept, to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist under both species; and that neither can it by any means be doubted, without injury to faith, that communion under either species is sufficient for them unto salvation." (Council of Trent, Session XXI, 1562) This is still the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Since long before that council the practice



of receiving communion only under the species of bread was general and remained so until after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1964) when the Catholic liturgy was reformed in accordance with the teaching of that council and Holy Communion and Holy Communion under both species was permitted under certain circumstances. 'Why?' one might ask. The current General Instruction of the Roman Missal explains why. "Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also, the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father's Kingdom." (281)

For this reason, we are encouraged to receive under both species. It can be seen as a means of deepening our experience of and devotion to this wonderful sacrament. The permission to receive under both species should not be seen as an innovation; it is, rather, the return to ancient practice. St Cyril of Jerusalem, in the middle of the fourth century, taught his newly baptised congregation: "When you come forward do not draw near with your hands wide open or with your fingers spread apart; instead, with your left hand make a throne for the right hand, which will receive the King. Receive the Body of Christ in the hollow of your hand and give the response: "Amen". Draw near also to the cup of the Blood. Do not stretch out your hands but bow in adoration and respect and say: "Amen". ((Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses*, 22, 23) In the coming weeks we will be developing ways in which we can receive under both species, if we wish, in as dignified and orderly fashion as possible

### DES HANRAHAN

I was born in 1944, in Burnley, Lancashire, the second of four children and in 1947 went to the parish primary school. In those



Fr Des, standing, with some parishioners in Wells.

days the highlight of the year was getting on the train for our holidays in Fleetwood where we always enjoyed making sand castles and watching the trams.

In 1956 I started secondary education at St Mary's College, Blackburn, eleven miles from home. The college was run by the Marist Fathers. In 1961 I joined a small group of boys from Hull, Middlesbrough and Blackburn in the sixth form at Winslade school, near Exeter, run by the Marist Fathers. We were interested in discovering our possible vocation in the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers).

The invitation for this project came from Fr Philip Graystone, who had been headmaster in Blackburn. After two years at Winslade I moved to Paignton in Devon, to the Marist House of Formation, where we did our noviciate and then studied for ordination to the priesthood.

In December 1969 Michael Simison and I were ordained in the parish church at Paignton. In the summer after ordination, I spent the summer at the Walsingham Shrine, assisting Fr. Roland Connelly, SM who was the first R.C. shrine director.

Then, in 1970 I went to Salford University to study pure and applied physics for three years, after which I was appointed to the Marist community in Hull to assist in the parish run by the Marists. In September 1976 I was appointed to Sidcup as a member of staff, teaching religious education, physics and and electronics in the secondary school run by the Marist

Fathers. Fr. Philip Graystone was the headmaster. Two years later there was an amalgamation with the Catholic girls' school at Abbey Wood and, from then onwards, the staff were instructed to address pupils by their forenames, rather than surnames. The boys didn't like that. Then, in 1980, I was appointed to my old school in Blackburn, which was in the process of becoming a sixth-form college, after an amalgamation with sixth-formers from the local Catholic girls' school.

In 1990 I joined two other Marists in a Sheffield parish, where we worked alongside three Presentation Sisters, who lived in an adjacent parish. Then, after a time of sabbatical renewal, I was appointed to the parish of St. Anne, in Whitechapel, living with a community of Marist Brothers (F.M.S).

Following that, two of us looked after the parish of St Charles in the centre of Hull for three years, after which the diocese asked us to care for three parishes in the West of Hull. Then, in 2004, I was appointed to join two Marists, and two Marist Sisters, in Carmarthen, West Wales. One of the sisters was Sr. Carmel who many of you will know from the time she spent recently here in this parish.

In 2010 I was appointed to St Lawrence's, the parish in Sidcup which was run by the Marists. Then, in 2010, I was appointed to the French church in Leicester Place, Notre Dame de France. At the time the Marist community comprised men from Ireland, England, France, Germany and Spain. As a French Ethnic Chaplaincy, Notre Dame serves French Catholics living in London, as well running a Saturday sandwich service, a refugee centre, and supporting the Westminster Night Shelter scheme. At that time, we took part in the Spirit in the City evangelisation work, with the cooperation of the other three West End Catholic churches.

In 2018 I returned to Hull to work in the parish until we handed it over to the diocese, which made me free to help out

by supplying at other parishes in the area.

In 2022 I was appointed to the Marist community in Wells-next-the-Sea to be with Frs. Keith and Tom. And here I am, and I'm happy to be here.

Desmond Hanrahan

The editor adds, "... and I would like to say that we are all very happy to have you here."

## VATICAN II AND THE SYNODAL PATH

Nowadays, I am uncomfortably aware when I speak about the Second Vatican Council especially, when there are young people listening, that it took place quite a long time ago: sixty years ago. When I was a teenager the First World War, which for me definitely came in the category of 'history', was nearer to me in time than Vatican II is to many of our young people. Nonetheless, many of the aspirations to which that Council gave rise within the Church are, as yet, barely realised.

All the popes who have succeeded John XXIII, who convoked the council, have spoken of its importance and emphasised that the documents it published represent the authentic way forward for the Catholic Church. Pope John-Paul II, for example, taught us that, "Vatican II remains the fundamental event of the life of the contemporary Church;



A plenary session of the Vatican Council. The scale of the meeting, like the impact it had on the Church, was enormous.

fundamental for the deepening of the richness given to them by Christ; fundamental for the fruitful contact with the contemporary world in a prospective of evangelization and of dialogue on every level with all people of attentive consciences" (Teachings of John Paul II, vol. IX, 1, 1986, p. 1724.)

It is reasonable to presume that something similar was in the mind of Pope Francis when, in 2021, he announced a Synod with the title "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission". The preparatory document for that Synod begins with the words, "The Church of God is convoked in Synod..." Note that it does not say 'the bishops of the Church', or the clergy,' or 'those who might be interested' are convoked in Synod. It says 'the whole Church, all of us. And this is not yet history; it is happening now.

A Synodal Church is a community, its members united in heart and mind and who actively participate in the Church's mission. This what I took from, and was inspired by, when I read the documents of Vatican II when they were first published; this is what Pope Francis is asking us to become when he speaks of a Church which follows the synodal path. What better preparation could there be than to re-visit those documents. They are not, however an easy read, nor are they all of equal importance.

The major documents of the Second Vatican Council are :

***Dei Verbum***, which places the Word of God at the heart of the Church's life;

***Sacrosanctum Concilium***, which promotes a liturgical life that gives God the true worship owed him by all his people;

***Lumen Gentium***, which reflects on the very nature of Church, the People of God; and

***Gaudium et Spes*** which considers the relationship between the Church and the modern world.

We will be offering opportunities to become more familiar with these documents and looking into their importance as insights into the Synodal Path.

